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PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

BY THE HON. ALFRED LYTTETLTON.

THE war in South Africa is over, and peace has been concluded on terms touched by the spirit of that chivalry in which, to the undying honor of the two belligerents, hostilities were conducted. The greatest administrative task of a hundred years now confronts the conqueror.

His Majesty the King, Lord Milner, his illustrious representative in South Africa, Lord Kitchener and the Generals of that army who by their sacrifices have title paramount to fashion and mould our tone, have set us a noble example in the thought and language of conciliation. Let us, therefore, before approaching the practical problems of the day, dwell for a moment on the affinities between the Dutch and the British races.

Though both races have a commercial character, the best characteristics of both nations have been largely influenced by agricultural and sea-faring pursuits. The Boer farmer and the English agricultural laborer, when for a time under military discipline, soon fraternized; if heredity has anything in it, the descendants of De Ruyter and Van Tromp ought to have some sympathies ready made with the descendants of Drake and Fro-bisher. It can do us no harm, at this time, to remember also that the love of religious and political freedom induced men of the same race as the Boers to turn their country, a marvel of human industry, into one vast lake, from which cities with their steeples and towers rose like islands, and that the hero who inspired that colossal sacrifice was our ally and afterwards our king.

It is not merely in Europe that the Dutch and British races have found spheres of harmonious action. New York was once New Amsterdam; the Dutch who inhabited it were, after a fierce contest, absorbed by the American branch of our race; and the

names of Stuyvesant and Vanderbilt, and the illustrious association which gathers round the name of Roosevelt, attest the consolidating power of time and the worth and varied strength of a blended race.

It is not to be expected of human nature that the loss of their independence can be borne for a time, at any rate, by the Boers without grief; but, although national independence has too many glorious associations to make its loss other than grievous, some consolations may, at any rate, be legitimately drawn from reflection on that Empire into which the new territories are to be gathered. The ideal of a South Africa united under the British flag is higher than that of a South Africa split into independent nationalities, governed under contradictory systems and armed against each other; and if the success of the British cause in South Africa has destroyed the independence of a small nationality, we may trust that it will be, at the same time, "a triumph for all time of those principles which Imperial Britain represents, that larger freedom, that higher justice, beneath whose sovereign sway the trader of every land may uncord his bales on all her shores, unhindered, the devout of every race pray to God in his own accents unafraid." Personal liberty, religious toleration and the free expansion of the individual are not always safeguarded by national independence. Turkey, China, Russia may have their merits, but those countries are not the homes of liberty. Every lover of liberty should, therefore, determine that the loss to the Boers of national independence should, as far as possible, be compensated by the institution and maintenance of a government truly worthy of the best Imperial traditions, under whose rule races of different history, aspiration, language, temperament and color may, in South Africa as elsewhere, combine to enrich and expand their common country.

That this ideal is not visionary or vaunting we may point as a proof to the work achieved by Lord Milner and his associates in the conquered provinces, while they were yet burdened with the enormous difficulties and responsibilities of a state of war. The law affecting the natives of the Transvaal has been already stripped of the harsh and terrifying characteristics which, perhaps naturally, had been evolved in the Transvaal out of the sanguinary contests between the Boer and Kaffir. The opportunities of oppression open to those who sought cheap labor and rapid

fortunes by means of which natives, ignorant of the nature of the bargains they were making, were aggrieved, have been removed, and Government officials, with no pecuniary interest at stake, now explain to the native miners the nature of the labor contract, and ensure that it shall be voluntarily undertaken. The contract once made, another class of officials, Government inspectors of natives, provide a system of supervision that gives both to the native and to his employer an easy means of redress for breaches of contract. Again, more valuable than all, the illicit drink traffic with natives has been put down with salutary ruthlessness.

A wonderful start has also been made in a work presenting if possible greater difficulties. To the genuine delight of their parents, while the war was yet raging, a larger number of Dutch children enjoyed elementary education than ever before in the two provinces. Dutch teachers taught to the children their own religious faith, using for this purpose the Taal language, which, though a barbarous tongue in ordinary use, rises in connection with Biblical teaching to a homely and picturesque dignity. After religious conviction had thus been satisfied, the parents of the children saw, with profound satisfaction, lessons given in English by English teachers, in all other branches of elementary education. It should be a source of lasting pride to soldiers that the idea of educating, in the camps, the sons and daughters of the enemy in the field was conceived by Lord Methuen and developed afterwards by Mr. Sargent, the Director of Education, in a spirit finely portrayed in the injunction conveyed by him to the volunteer teachers from Canada, Australia, and the Mother Country at the outset of their work:

“Seek out then those who know the children of the land and spend many of your hours out of school with them, try to learn something of the Taal, that expressive language of Dutch-Africander population, which measures and describes everything through the experience of farm life, offer to talk of your home occupation, and to read with your comrades the works of English literature that you value most; ask them to lead you to the tents of those among their countrymen from whom you can gain the deepest insight into the Boer character. In a word, go among your fellow-workers as friends and equals and as messengers of peace.”

The limits of this article do not permit more than a bare reference to the reform of the gold and patent laws by Sir Richard

Solomon, to the interesting and important scheme for irrigation of Mr. Wilcox, and to the land settlement plans of Mr. Arnold-Forster, which bear witness to the industry, foresight and sympathy of the new administration.

It will be gathered from the preceding observations that Government, in the conquered provinces, is dealing and has to deal with the intricate problems presented by a modern, commercial, and civilized community, and that the task must necessarily absorb the greater part of an intellect even so powerful and rapid in working as that of Lord Milner.

A real difficulty in the situation is that, in addition to the administration of the intricate commercial life of Johannesburg and the Rand, the needs of a scattered primitive rural population have also to be studied. If it be possible, it would be good that the British representatives should revive that part of Mr. Krüger's system which showed true understanding of the character of the farmers and rural population over whom he exercised such unquestionable sway. His custom was to receive freely at stated times in personal interview those who alleged grievances and sought redress. If a Dutchman, over a pipe of tobacco on the *stoep*, has had, without interruption, his slow say, revolving heavily like one of his own windmills in a lazy breeze, even if he fail to carry his point, his grievance will take a milder hue, and he will recognize the fairness of an adverse decision. These tranquil interviews would unconsciously inoculate active officials with understanding of our grave fellow-subjects and their solitary aspirations.

While things are of good presage generally in the conquered territories, a formidable controversy has arisen in the Cape Colony. A large party, distinguished in its devotion to the cause of loyalty and supported by Lord Milner, advocates the temporary suspension of the Cape constitution. It should, however, be very specially noted that Lord Milner's support to this movement was given before the declaration of peace, and that we have no knowledge whether that important *nouveau fait* has or has not modified his views. It would be wrong to assume that because those views were, as it seems, firmly held before the peace, they have of necessity remained unchanged to the present time. However this may be, the controversy is one which may well be conducted in the spirit of those between Carlyle and Sterling, who, except in

opinion, did not disagree, for both parties emblazon on their banners peace, truce to racial animosity, avoidance of exasperating topics on exasperating occasions, and both seek, we may assuredly believe, the blending of races without whose concord the future of South Africa must be dark. For myself, I am of opinion that at this moment the weight of the argument against even a temporary suspension of the Cape constitution over-balances those in its favor, but this opinion should not impair the desire or ability to state these arguments with sympathy and fairness and with an entire faith in the patriotism and goodwill of those who advance them.

The case for suspension is advocated by reasoning of which the following is, it is hoped, a fair summary. The primary duty, it is said, of statesmen is to face facts as they really are; their commonest fault is the rehearsal of formulas once vital with truth but now out-worn and irrelevant. Let it be granted that free institutions and representative government are in our empire under normal conditions unquestioned rights. They are misplaced when a country is yet reeling from the shock of racial strife. The cardinal requisites of the country are repose and concord; and for the culture of these blessed fruits a climate is needed from which all frosty asperities shall be banished, and in which all assuaging influences shall be left to expand unhindered. The pacific spirit will mellow if the occasions for strife are withdrawn. The Dutch, as well as the British, desire nothing but a just and firm government, under whose ordered rule material prosperity can revive, and whose temperate, reasonable influence will wither the noisier sections of peevish politicians and windy agitators. What, it is urged, can be more foolish than to embark men who, in their hearts, sincerely wish to let bygones be bygones and to revive peace and goodwill, upon a general election, an occasion which, at all times, and with the most united and lethargic people, begets wrath and violent speech, but which now, in South Africa, would of necessity arouse passionate recriminations between men of different blood and race, who have lately witnessed a war with emotions such as those which consumed the Athenian and Syracuse spectators of the great battle in the Harbor of Syracuse. Our common object, it is said, is the free federation of the provinces of South Africa under the British flag. Suspend the constitution for a time, and not only will you attain this end

sooner, but you will attain it without rekindling animosity and without making damaging concessions in the Cape Colony which would be wrung from you under the stress of Dutch parliamentary predominance.

No candid mind can fail to see force in this position; no sensible mind can hold, without diffidence, conclusions antagonistic to that formed on the spot by men intimately conversant with the local conditions. Yet the answer to the position sketched above appears convincing. The British Parliament is the only authority by which this *coup d'état* can be sanctioned, and in the British Parliament necessity is the only cause by which such a *coup d'état* can be justified. Now, the arguments in favor of suspension are not the arguments of necessity but of expediency. Probably they are conceived on the hypothesis that tactics are to be expected from the Bond party after, similar to those it employed before and during, the war, and that the peace, which, by its chivalrous terms, has already done so much to assuage the bitterness between the belligerents, is to be reckoned as if it had not taken place when the situation in the Cape Colony is reviewed. This hypothesis does not appear to be well founded; for, putting aside all ideas of gratitude for the generosity with which their kinsmen have been treated, it ought to be remembered that the Cape Dutch have, like all their race, much practical sense, and that the conclusion of the war has after all fundamentally changed the situation. The dream of a greater Holland has vanished, the formidable armies of the northern provinces have been dispersed and disarmed, the millions by which agitation was promoted and the press inflamed are no longer at the command of the late President and the ambitious and unscrupulous Hollanders who incited him to his ruin. Why should the Cape Dutchmen be straightway written down, like the Bourbon, incapable of learning and incapable of forgetting? Such may be his character, but let it be proven to be so before steps are taken which, with the best intentions, will appear to be an invasion of those equal rights for which the war was waged, and which will equip every hostile agitator with arrows from the respectable quivers of Hampden, Pym, Somers and other constitutional worthies of our history. Assuming concord to be the object to be sought by both sides, and the animosity of races to be avoided, why is the agitation on the platform which has already begun in

the Cape Colony to be less irritant than the normal parliamentary election, when all conditions are the same, except that every constitutionalist will have a grievance in addition to those which he considers that he already possessed from the operation of martial law? How strangely compounded must be a Dutchman if he is explosive at an election, exercising his customary rights, but unexplosive on the platform, protesting against uncustomary restrictions.

Lastly, if these views are wrong, it will not be too late to reverse them, if necessity does arise, by the refusal of the Cape Parliament to grant supply or to pass an Act of Indemnity.

Since writing the above, the despatch of Mr. Chamberlain to Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson, has been published, and the decision of the British government definitely pronounced against suspension. It will be noted that:

1. Stress is laid on the fact that the petition to suspend was signed before the termination of hostilities, and before the circumstances attending the close of the war were known;

2. That hope is firmly entertained that the Cape Parliament will not fail in its very evident duty to pass an Act of Indemnity, which will protect those who have administered martial law and those who have levied taxes without Parliamentary authority;

3. The opinion is expressed that to deprive the Cape Colonists, even for a time, of their constitutional rights without giving to the present representatives of the people the opportunity of expressing their opinions on such a great change, is likely rather to produce discontent and agitation than to pacify race hatred;

Finally, in language truly conciliatory, a powerful appeal is made to moderate men of all parties to avoid further strife, and to allay the passions excited by the war and by previous controversy.

It is inevitable, having regard to the strength and authority of opinion adverse to the policy laid down in this despatch, that a feeling of soreness and resentment may at first be excited by it; but it is most earnestly to be hoped that its mandate may be loyally accepted, and that the British spirit of legality will manifest itself, which enjoins cheerful acquiescence, even by those who are unconvinced, in adverse judgments, honestly and deliberately pronounced.

ALFRED LYTTELTON.